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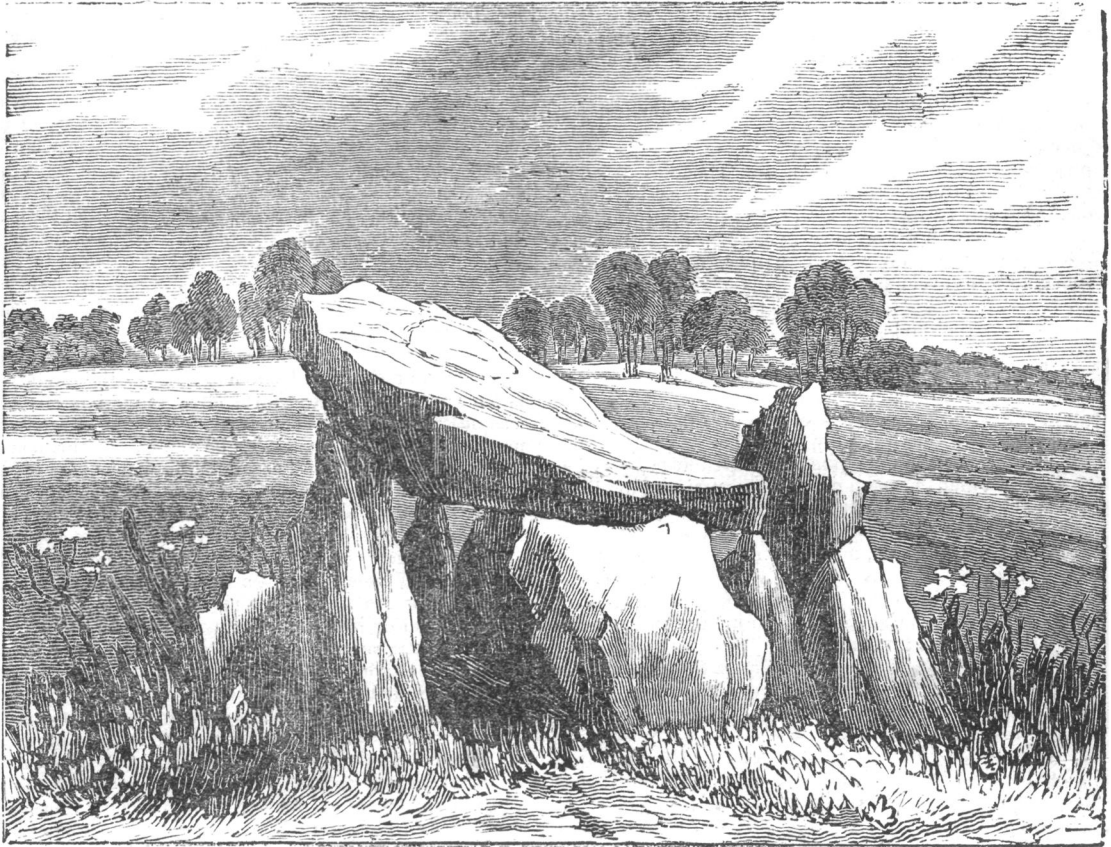
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ruin, closing up the pass effectually, too late to bar retreat, but just in time to preclude the enemies' pursuit.

"Thus the whole well contrived military speculation of young Rock was defeated. The destinies of Providence dashed his enterprize, and dissolved it like a mist upon the mountain. The Bantry men soon got through the defile; they joined the detachment of the king's troops at the Glen's mouth, and they all retreated unmolested to Bantry.

"Some time after, a large body of troops surrounded and scoured the mountains, but no Captain Rock; he had retreated in hopelessness into the fastnesses of Slievegher and it cost the sappers and miners of the King's army, many a blast, and many a pound of powder, before they broke up the rock with which Lieutenant Starlight, a minute too late, closed up the pass of Cooleagh."



GIANT'S RING.

About four miles from Belfast, in the parish of Drumbo, there is a very extraordinary monument of antiquity, called the Giant's Ring. It consists of an enormous circle, perfectly level, about five hundred and eighty feet in diameter, or nearly one third of an Irish mile in circumference. This vast ring is enclosed by an immense mound or parapet of earth, upwards of eighty feet in breadth at the base; and though it is probable, in the lapse of nearly two thousand years, the height of this bank must have much decreased, it is still so great as to hide the surrounding country, except the tops of the mountains, entirely from the view; and in its original state there is not a doubt but that they were also invisible.

Near the centre of the circle stands the *cromlech*, or rude altar of stone; and whether the proofs that such monuments were used in the idolatrous adoration of the sun, be or be not satisfactory, it is a circumstance that deserves to be remembered, that the Giant's Ring would exclude from the gaze of a mistaken multitude every object but the glorious luminary himself, whose beams they worshipped. It is a place which is calculated to inspire an uninformed druid with additional superstition, or with the necessity of increased mortification; and they who formed it had a just conception of those human feelings which are extensive in their influence, powerful in their operation, and most deeply to be moved by external nature. The sloping stone of the altar is almost circular, being seven feet in one direction, six and

a half in the other, and upwards of a foot in thickness at the edges, but in the centre considerably more. This *cromlech* is either very erroneously described by Mr. Harris, or its appearance has greatly altered since the year 1744. We are informed in the History of the County of Down, that "two ranges of pillars, each consisting of seven, support this monstrous rock, beside which there are several other stones fixed upright in the ground, at the distance of about four feet. Of these latter there remains but one; the upper stone at present rests upon four, and not upon fourteen supporters; the entire number which compose the altar is only ten—and though it is probable that several may have fallen down, or in some manner changed their position, it is inconceivable how so great a disproportion as the two accounts present could ever be reconciled."*

HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII.

SIR—The following particulars of the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii—the former laid under a leaden covering of lava, and the latter immersed in an ashy grave of pulverized matter, may not be uninteresting or useless to some of your readers.—Those sepulchred remains of Roman splendour which give us a knowledge of a true Roman city, with its temples, palaces, and baths—

* Stat. Acc. pp. 256.—278.

theatres and amphitheatres—its splendid forum—its triumphal arches—its Doric, Corinthian, and Ionic columns—its pilastered halls and peristyles—its frescoed walls and friezes.

Pompeii and Herculaneum are situated very near the burning Vesuvius*—the former five miles distant from it—the latter much nearer, and it is owing to its approximation, that Herculaneum suffered so severely and received the worst effects of this fearful visitation, the full force of its destructive wrath—being completely enveloped in an impenetrable mass of lava—while Pompeii was by its greater distance and its elevated situation buried *only* beneath clouds of ashes and showers of molten stones, (called lapille) and cinders, but these fell in such vast volumes that they obscured the light of day—and it may be attributed to this circumstance that Pompeii is much easier of excavation than Herculaneum, yet it takes about a year to disinter one house, for the vapouring steam which proceeded from the crater of the volcanic Vesuvius, “descending in torrents of rain united with the ashes suspended in the air, washed them after they had fallen into places where it could not well have penetrated in a dry state,” filled up every cranny and left perfect casts of whatever substances it enveloped.

“There it found

The myriad fantasies of hearts and brains,
Young lovers, and hopes, and pleasures, all abroad,
Spreading their painted wings, and wantoning
In life's glad summer breeze, from flow'r to flow'r,
And, with the fatal spell of one dread glance,
Blighted them all!”

The air was still at the time of the first indications of an eruption, a cloud of smoke mounted up straight from Vesuvius, and spread itself about: which Pliny the younger, who was an eye witness, compared to the trunk and branches of an enormous pine tree, but some clearer indications of the coming storm was soon given,—dreadful murky clouds saturated with “igneous serpentine vapour,” rose about them—and parted at the same time with lightning-like trains of fire; “the vital air was changed into a sulphurous vapour, charged with burning dust,” and the heat which accompanied the showers of volcanic scorrie, was “sufficient to char wood, and volatilize the more subtle part of the ashes”—add to this, the darkness which overspread the city, “not,” says Pliny, “like a cloudy night, or when there is no moon, but of a room when it is shut up and all the lights extinct.” Nothing then was to be heard but the shrieks of women, the screams of children, and the cries of men; some calling for their children, others for their parents, others for their husbands, and only distinguishing each other by their voices; one lamenting his own fate, another that of his family; some wishing to die for the very fear of dying; some lifting up their hands to the gods; but the greater part imagining that the last and eternal night was come, which was to destroy the gods and the world together.

Pompeii was evacuated in all the hurry of a precipitate retreat—what a scene! Every person and thing thrown into the utmost confusion; darkness surrounding them—the prisoners in the jails craving to be released. That such a frightful scene did take place, is evident from the state in which the town is found on excavation. Human skeletons and household utensils in the greatest disorder presented themselves to the eyes of the miners. The bones of a sentinel were discovered outside the gate of the city in a niche in the wall, still on his post, and grasping even in death his spear. But the most affecting and melancholy instance of it is, the shin bones of the inmates of the prisons still in the iron shackles that bound them at the time of the evacuation of the city, after having endured an incarceration of 1676 years. Another striking instance of the shortness of the notice this ill-fated people received, is exhibited “in the forum, opposite to the temple of Jupiter; a new altar of white marble, exquisitely beautiful, and apparently just out of the hands of the sculptor, had been erected there—an enclosure

was building all round; the mortar just dashed against the side of the wall, was but half spread out; you saw the long sliding stroke of the trowel about to return and obliterate its own tracks—but it never did return! the hand of the workman was suddenly arrested, and, after the lapse of 1800 years, the whole looks so fresh and new, that you would almost swear the mason was only gone to his dinner and about to come back immediately to smooth the roughness.”* How feelingly does this remind us of the confusion that reigned in the city; the noise is heard, and the people shout that Vesuvius is pouring on them its red hot cinders—the sound is re-echoed from street to street, the mechanic catches the alarm, casts away his trowel, and flies. To such an extent did fell destruction operate on Pompeii, that where it stood was a mystery, its site was unknown for ages, till chance brought it again to light. The first indications of ruins were observed in 1689; but the excavations did not commence till 1755. It thus lay from the year A. D. 79 sealed up. It, however, on this account escaped the ravages and plunder of the barbarian hordes who from time to time swept over Italy, and annihilated every work of art that their destroying hands could reach. It now appears to us, as it was 1800 years ago—the pictures still against the walls, exhibiting all their original freshness of tint; the domestic furniture, pots and pans scattered about in the hurry of use.

The area of Pompeii is about 161 acres, the excavated part is about one fourth of the city, yet that portion has occupied 83 years. When it is entirely cleared, (if we may hope that such will ever be the case,) our knowledge of Roman customs, architecture, habits and literature, &c., &c., will be much increased.

How awfully sudden was its transformation! now the “busy hum of men” and the rattling of different vehicles is heard through the streets, and re-echoed through its lofty temples, domes, and porticoes, all the noise and bustle of civic pride and pomp resounds—

“But louder rose the terrible voice of ruin,
Over their mirth, ‘be still,’ and all was hushed,
Save the short shuddering cries that rose unheard,
The upturn'd glances from a thousand homes
Thro’ the red closing surge! the awful groan
Of agitated nature—and beneath,
Ten thousand victims turn’d to die—above,
Bright sunbeams lit the plain—a nameless tomb.”

Yes, in a moment all was still and hushed for ever; the oblivious voice of destruction closed above its unhappy inmates, and shut them at the same time from the light of day and life. All were involved in a common grave.

H.

THE IRISH HERCULANEUM.

I chanced the other day to light on a MS. headed “The Irish Herculaneum,” and recollecting that there was a description of the town of Bannow in your Journal, I referred to it for the purpose of ascertaining, whether this was a transcript, or an extract from that, for at first sight I supposed it to be either, but perceived that the MS. account was entirely different, and that it treated, though briefly, rather of the appearance of the country around—that it was just an opening description to the town itself. I think, however, that it must be interesting, as every circumstance connected with such a remarkable phenomenon is worth attention.

A town in Ireland swallowed up by a devouring sand! and, like its illustrious prototypes, Pompeii and Herculaneum, converted in a short time, from a flourishing, beautiful, busy town, with its inhabitants engaged about their various affairs, (though not by the agency of melting lava or red hot cinders, but by a substance which completed its work as effectually,) into a noiseless dreary waste of moving sand, like an African desert scene, where its whirling, sandy drifts are agitated by a gale of wind, and looks like a troubled sea, undulating to every passing breeze, and making all that comes within its reach one universal scene of wide-spread desolation. I will now add the description given in the MS.

* The crater of Vesuvius is still supposed by the superstitious to be the road to the infernal regions.

* Library of Entertaining Knowledge.